

DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR APRIL 2023

Reflections on Scripture Readings prepared by Jim Dooley sm
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Opening Prayer. Isaiah 43/1-3

But now, thus says Yahweh,
who created you, Jacob,
who formed you, Israel.
Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name, you are mine.
Should you pass through the sea, I will be with you;
or through rivers, they will not swallow you up.
Should you walk through fire, you will not be scorched
and the flames will not burn you.
For I am Yahweh, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

Saturday 1 April

Ezekiel 37:21-28, Cantic of Jeremiah 31:10-13, John 11:45-57

He died for us all

Today is the eve of Holy Week. It is preparation time. The events of the coming week are the culmination of Jesus' life among us. His arrival in Jerusalem to celebrate the festival of Passover. His supper with his disciples and the institution of the Eucharist. His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. His crucifixion on Calvary and his resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday. In the coming week, we participate in the events that define Jesus' saving action. Today we can prepare ourselves to take part.

Sunday 2 April

PALM SUNDAY

Isaiah 50:4-7, Psalm 21:8-24, Philippians 2:6-11, Matthew 26:14-27,66

A moment of triumph

Paul, writing to the Philippians, invites us to bend the knee at the name of Jesus and acclaim him as Lord. On his arrival in Jerusalem for Passover, the Jewish people greeted him with palms and acclaimed him as king. Jesus, Son of God, knew that he had come among us to give his life for our salvation and to accept death on a cross. But God raised him on high, Paul says. And so do we. Today, we celebrate his triumphal welcome to Jerusalem. We bend the knee at his name and acclaim him king.

Monday 3 April

Isaiah 42:1-7, Psalm 27, John 12:1-11

Bethany

Bethany, near Jerusalem, is where Jesus could feel at home. He enjoyed the hospitality of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in their home. There was good food and warm conversation. On this particular visit, Mary had some precious ointment for him, pure nard. So she anointed Jesus with it and the aroma filled the house. So let's be with Jesus and the Bethany family today. Enjoy the aroma and join in the conversation around the table.

Tuesday 4 April

Isaiah 49:1-6, Psalm 71, John 13:21-23, 36-38

When the cock crows

Judas, Peter, any one of us. There are no exceptions. We are all familiar with the human experience of failing to deliver what we truly thought we could promise. Call it shame, guilt, regret or betrayal but failure is an integral part of the human experience. It is also an important source of learning in our spiritual journey. Peter stumbled over it. Judas despaired of it. Jesus forgave it. He also invites us to forgive failure in ourselves and others. Let's not wait for the cock to crow.

Wednesday 5 April

Isaiah 50:4-9, Psalm 69, Matthew 26:14-25

Not I, Rabbi, surely?

It is easy for us to join the chorus of voices that simply condemn Judas. Don't we readily do that to anyone who has clearly sinned? It is not so easy to find understanding, compassion and ultimately forgiveness of the sinner. Understanding? Was Judas, perhaps, simply addicted to greed for money? It is a fairly common addiction. Compassion? Did Judas, perhaps, believe that Jesus would escape his captors? Sadly, we can all make mistakes of judgement. And forgiveness? It is because we are loved that we are forgiven, not because we have sinned. The saying continues to be true, "there go I, but for the grace of God."

Thursday 6 April

HOLY THURSDAY

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14, Psalm 115:12-18, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-15

Never!

Ouch! Poor Peter! It is so difficult to unlearn what you have learnt to believe with all your heart. Peter was so sure that discipleship was about serving his master. "Never. You will never wash my feet" he protested to Jesus. But discipleship is not about service. It is about love. And love is especially about letting yourself be loved. In essence, Jesus tells Peter 'If you do not let me love you, you cannot be my disciple.' So let us respond with Peter's enthusiasm, "Not only my feet, but my hands and head as well."

Friday 7 April

GOOD FRIDAY

Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Psalm 31, Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42

"Ours were the sufferings he bore"

Isaiah names the sufferings Jesus bore as ours. "He was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins." God sent his Son among us to redeem us. So Jesus embraced and lived the entire human experience in all its aspects, from birth in a humble stable to death by crucifixion on Calvary. His life included suffering for our sins. He was crucified because we sinned. Today we hold his suffering with compassion in our hearts and in silent prayer. The sufferings he bore this day belong to us.

Saturday 8 April

HOLY SATURDAY

Romans 6:3-11, Psalm 117:1-23, Matthew 28:1-19

An empty tomb

Death itself feels empty and cold. When Mary of Magdala and her women friends went with their precious spices and oils to the tomb of Jesus to anoint his lifeless body, they must have gone with those same feelings in their hearts, coldness and emptiness. And they arrived at a cold and empty tomb. We can imagine and share their feelings, initially confused and terrified and then, perhaps, a glimmer of hope and even excitement. Could it be true? Has he risen as he said he would? Can you share their feelings?

Sunday 9 April

EASTER SUNDAY

Acts 10:34, 37-43, Psalm 117:1-23, Colossians 3:1-4, John 20:1-9

The promise delivered

Jesus had promised that he would rise again from the dead after three days. It was God's redemptive plan that his Son would die but would also conquer death. Life does not end with death for those whom Jesus has redeemed. Death is not the end. That is the meaning of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Like Jesus, we are destined to rise again to new life. Blessed are we who believe that the promise made to us will be fulfilled. Today, that promise fills our hearts with excitement, hope and joy.

Monday 10 April

EASTER OCTAVE

Acts 2:14, 22-33, Psalm 16, Matthew 28:8-15

Fake news

There is nothing new about the spread of disinformation. When Jesus had risen from the dead, the Jewish authorities concocted a story that his body had been stolen for the

tomb. Does that story about something stolen sound familiar? The Jewish soldiers colluded in spreading the fake news and many believed them. But the women who had visited the tomb and found it empty had met Jesus risen and alive. They embraced him with affection. Can you join them, fall at his feet and embrace him, too.

Tuesday 11 April

Acts 2:36-41, Psalm 33, John 20:11-18

Called by name

When Jesus meets Mary of Magdala in the Garden and says her name, she wants to hug him. “Mary” he says, with a gentle love. With that one word, Jesus captures and communicates all the intimacy of their friendship. He connects with all that Mary holds in her heart as he stands before her in the Garden, the fear, grief and despair and now the surprise and growing excitement and hope. But most of all, Jesus stirs in Mary her intimate love of him. Of course she wants to hug him. Every fibre of her body is overwhelmed with the desire to respond to his greeting. Let Jesus speak your name to you today.

Wednesday 12 April

Acts 3:1-10, Psalm 105, Luke 24:13-35

Synodality

Synodality is about walking together, listening and having conversation. When Jesus joined the two disciples who were making their way to the town of Emmaus, the disciples told him their story of what had just happened in Jerusalem. Jesus listened. Then he shared what he understood the scriptures prophesied about the Christ. The two disciples listened. When they reached their destination, they celebrated Eucharist together. Is that what we try to replicate at Mass? We listen to one another. We listen to the scriptures. Then we celebrate and receive the Sacrament.

Thursday 13 April

Acts 3:11-36, Psalm 8, Luke 24:35-48

Touch me

Whenever the disciples encountered Jesus risen from the dead they were terrified and confused. The evidence of his resurrection was before their eyes. They could see his hands and his feet, the wounds of his crucifixion.

But Jesus knew they needed more to allay their fears. "Touch me" he said to them. There is nothing more convincing than touch. It breaks new ground. It invites a relationship of intimacy and trust. Jesus invites us to touch him.

Friday 14 April

Acts 4:1-12, Psalm 118, John 21:1-14

Fishermen

Jesus' friends were experienced fishermen. They understood well that sometimes you could fish all night and catch nothing. But they had no understanding at all of how Jesus could direct them to where they could catch an abundance of fish. They also had no understanding of how Jesus could be standing on the shore of the lake after they had seen him crucified and his body laid to rest in the tomb. These are events that defy human understanding. Rather, they invite and challenge us to believe. Like the fishermen, we believe because we have faith. And we pray, Lord, give strength to our faith.

Saturday 15 April

Acts 4:13-21, Psalm 118, Mark 16:9-15

Who to believe

Even Jesus' chosen Apostles did not believe those who had seen Jesus after he had risen from the dead. In today's world, we are often challenged to discern what to believe. Political propaganda is common place. Social media provides many platforms for the spread of stories that may or may not be true. The question becomes who to believe rather than what to believe. Mary of Magdala and the two disciples who met the risen Jesus are credible witnesses to his resurrection. We believe them. Let us share their excitement as they tell their story.

Sunday 16 April

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 5:12-16, Psalm 118, Apocalypse 1:9-13, 17-18, John 20:19-31

Evidence

Thomas, the Apostle, needed evidence that Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus helps us understand and accept that need. When he came to the disciples in the upper room, Jesus gave Thomas a very special and privileged experience. "Look, here are my hands" he said to Thomas. "Give me your hand. Put it into my side." Thomas had the evidence he needed so that he could believe. Ask Jesus for what you need. Let him gift you in a special way, as he gifted Thomas.

Monday 17 April

Acts 4:23-31, Psalm 2, John 3:1-8

Lord, stretch out your hand

The early church community of disciples presents us with a powerful experience of prayer. They had gathered with the Apostles to work out their response to the persecution they were suffering. Their prayer was inspired by the miracles they had witnessed and by the message of salvation that Jesus had given them. "Lord" they prayed, "stretch out your hand." And by their prayer in the name of Jesus, the community of disciples was filled with the Holy Spirit. What brings energy and inspiration for you when you reach out to Jesus in prayer?

Tuesday 18 April

Acts 4:32-37, Psalm 93, John 3:7-15

Born in the spirit

Becoming a disciple of Jesus is like being born into a new life. How the Christian disciple sees the world is changed. New perspectives, new values emerge. Jesus speaks to Nicodemus of this transformation. The kingdom of God, heaven and eternal life become a new focus and a new part of the conversation. The disciple is born in the spirit and is guided by the Holy Spirit. Give thanks to God for this new way of life.

Wednesday 19 April

Acts 5:17-26, Psalm 34, John 3:16-21

Redemption

Jesus came to save mankind, not to condemn mankind. Jesus, the Son of God, was sent by God into the world to live the life of humanity in all its fullness. That is our faith. Even our human limitations and the deficiencies and failings that are inherent in the human condition were shared by Jesus.

In this unimaginable plan, God has sent his own Son to redeem our flawed humanity, to make it sacred and to affirm God's unfailing love for all mankind.

By embracing the human condition in all its aspects and by conquering death in his resurrection from the dead, Jesus has redeemed us. Let us savour the wonder of this truth in our prayer today.

Thursday 20 April

Acts 5:27-33, Psalm 34, John 3:31-36

The Son of God

John the Baptist is our witness to the divinity of Jesus. John testifies that Jesus is the Son of God, loved by God and sent by God to speak God's own words to us. Jesus alone can speak with authority of heaven and of the things he alone has heard and seen. He can speak of eternal life. John the Baptist encourages us to believe these truths about Jesus himself and about the Spirit of God whom Jesus has without reserve. Let these truths be at the heart of your prayer today.

Friday 21 April

Acts 5:34-42, Psalm 27, John 6:1-15

Sitting ready

"Make the people sit down." That was the instruction Jesus gave to his helpers when he was about to feed the five thousand. The miracle of the loaves and fishes is repeated in a liturgical and sacramental way whenever we gather to celebrate Eucharist. We are the five thousand. The food we receive is the bread of life. It is the Sacrament of his body and blood. It is the gift of himself, given in love, given to feed and nourish our souls. We receive him when we are sitting ready. May the Eucharist be both miracle and Sacrament for you today.

Saturday 22 April

Acts 6:1-7, Psalm 33, John 6:16-21

“It is I.”

How often, in the Gospel stories, Jesus makes an unexpected appearance to his disciples. Each time, as the disciples react with surprise and often confusion, Jesus greets them with words of reassurance. “Peace be with you” or “Be not afraid” he will say. And then, “It is I.” When he identifies himself, it seems that their confusion disappears and they lose their fear and his presence brings the peace that he speaks of. Let Jesus’ words of reassurance be heard when you encounter him in your prayer today. “Peace be with you. Be not afraid. It is I.”

Sunday 23 April

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 2:14,22-33, Psalm 16, 1 Peter 1:17-21, Luke 24:13-25

Our identity

The disciples recognised Jesus when he took the bread and said the blessing. They were familiar with the Eucharist. It is where Christians meet with Jesus and with their fellow believers. It is where they find their identity. The Mass is at the heart and core of Christian life. Like the two disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, we walk with him and with one another and share our lives and our stories. But when we gather around the table at Eucharist, we enter into a union with Jesus and with one another that defines us as Christians. Let us especially treasure that gift today.

Monday 24 April

Acts 6:8-15, Psalm 119, John 6:22-29

Believe in me

The crowds who followed Jesus around the lake of Galilee had many motives for keeping on looking out for him. He had fed them. He had surprised them with many extraordinary miracles. He had promised them that the kingdom of God was close at hand. But when they asked him what they should really be looking for or what God

really wants of them, he replied simply to “believe in me”. That is our task, too. It is what God asks of us. To believe in Jesus. Pray today for the faith to believe deeply in the one whom God has sent.

Tuesday 25 April

ANZAC DAY

Wisdom 3:1-9, Psalm 71:2-17, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, John 12:23-28

Father, glorify your name

Jesus gave his life for his fellow men and women. In his death on Calvary, he carried out his own destiny and gave glory to his Father. He chose to die so that we may be saved. Today we remember the brave young men and women of our two countries whose destiny was to give their lives for our freedom. Their deaths were tragic. Yet in the sacrifice they made, God’s name was glorified. Let us remember them and honour them today and pray eternal life for them.

Wednesday 26 April

SAINT MARK EVANGELIST

1 Peter 5:5-14, Psalm 88:2-17, Mark 16:15-20

We have a mission

In the final chapter of his Gospel, Mark records that Jesus instructed his disciples to be missionaries. It was Jesus’ last instruction before he ascended to his Father in heaven. “Proclaim the Good News to all creation” he said. That is our mission. In a nut shell, the message, the Good News, is that Jesus has redeemed us and we are saved to eternal life. Our mission is to proclaim that message by the way we live our lives as people who know that we are redeemed. How do you foresee yourself being missionary today.

Thursday 27 April

Acts 8:26-40, Psalm 66, John 6:44-51

The bread of life

Jesus frequently speaks of himself as being the bread of life. It is a rich image that readily captures the heart of his relationship with us. Bread is the essential food that nourishes the body. It gives energy and comfort. In a similar way, Jesus' love for us is the essential food that nourishes our soul. It fills our hearts with energy and life. His love for us is truly our bread of life. How will you let Jesus show you his love today?

Friday 28 April

SAINT PETER CHANEL

Acts 13:44-52, Psalm 96, John 12:26

Follow me

There was nothing extraordinary about the lives of Peter, Andrew, James and John when Jesus asked them to leave their boats and nets and families and homes to follow him. Saint Peter Chanel, too, had a very ordinary life in post-Revolutionary France. The fifth of eight children, his family lived in a three bedroom home which they shared with an uncle and aunt, their two children and a grand parent. The call to follow Jesus has nothing to do with occupation or family circumstances. It is an invitation to find a generosity within that enables one to respond positively to a call to love and be loved. Peter Chanel followed Jesus in answering that call throughout his life and in his death. Saint Peter Chanel, pray for us.

Saturday 29 April

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

Acts 9:31-42, Psalm 116B, John 6:60-69

The Holy One of God

Who is Jesus for you? That question challenges all of us who are followers of Jesus just as it challenged those who had seen his miracles and heard his message. It is Peter who helps us find an answer. Peter had recognised that Jesus was the messiah, the one sent by God, the saviour. For Peter, Jesus' words are spirit and they give life. And Jesus has the message of eternal life. He is the Holy One of God. Is that who Jesus is for you?

Sunday 30 April

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 2:14, 36-41, Psalm 22:1-6, 1 Peter 2:20-25, John 10:1-10

This is my body

No amount of theological reflection or explanation can do justice to the reality of what Jesus has given us in the Eucharist. His words and actions at the Last Supper are repeated whenever we celebrate the liturgy of the Mass. What he gave to the disciples assembled in the upper room he gives to us.

We receive his body and his blood, just as they did, in the bread that is broken and in the cup that is shared. We remember his body broken and his blood shed for us on Calvary. How blessed are we to participate in this sacrament of his love.